

# Atammayatā

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

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*In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhadāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from [www.suanmokkh.org](http://www.suanmokkh.org) and [www.bia.or.th](http://www.bia.or.th). The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the volunteer and the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok ([suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com](mailto:suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com)).*

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Today we will be able to speak about something called *atammayatā*, *atammayatā*. This is a bit of a strange word for you, but we ask that you try to remember it. Please try to remember this Pāli word, *atammayatā*. It may be a little bit strange, but what's the strangest thing about it is that it's something that you've been traveling all over looking for it, without even knowing it.

You're all in search of something without knowing what it is. You've come to Thailand, probably without really knowing why you've come here. You're looking for something, searching for something, but you don't even know what that thing might be. All you know maybe is that there's something not quite satisfying about life, there's something missing in life, and so we're in search. We go looking for it although we don't really know what it is or where we might find it. All we feel it is that lack of contentment and satisfaction. And so we go to Koh Samui, we go to Koh Phangan, we even come to Suan Mokkh searching for something without really knowing what it is that we're looking for, looking for something new in life without knowing what that is. This is what is a bit strange about this thing, *atammayatā*. We don't know what it is but it's the thing we're looking for, this thing we call *atammayatā*.

Or we've heard that some of you are looking for yourselves, that you've gone off in search trying to find yourselves. This is correct because if one doesn't know one's self, then how could one ever know what one wants? These

two questions are connected. What it is that we really want, and what we are finding our self, who we are. These two are connected.

And so it's completely correct that one must find oneself. Because if we don't know ourselves, then we'll never know what it is we are missing, we won't know what it is that we need, and we won't know what it is that we're looking for. So it's important to know oneself. Let us tell you from the very start, let you know in advance that this thing that you're missing, that you're looking for, is what we'll be talking about today. Excuse us for saying so, so bluntly, but what you're looking for is what we're going to talk about today.

A lot of you are coming here all interested and excited about meditation, coming here to meditate, to learn about *samādhi*, learn about and practice *vipassanā*. Excuse us for saying so, but this kind of seems to be a sort of meditation fever, kind of like gold fever or something where people get all excited about some fad and who are running around trying to get some of whatever that is. People are very interested in meditation these days, very interested in *vipassanā*, but very few of them have any clue what it's really about. They just kind of guess or hope that there's something good in it for me. There's a kind of meditation fever these days, people all excited about it. More and more people are coming to Suan Mokkh for these reasons. But let me point out that if one meditates to the fullest, if *vipassanā* progresses completely, then it will come to just this thing, *atammayatā*. The thing we'll get from *vipassanā* is just *atammayatā*.

So now there's a *vipassanā* fever in this world, people all over the place getting excited and flocking to find out about *vipassanā*, without knowing what they're going to get from it, without even knowing what *vipassanā* is. So allow us to tell you from the start that the thing we can get from *vipassanā* is simply *atammayatā*. *Atammayatā* is what we get from *vipassanā*.

*Vipassanā* means 'to see clearly, directly, distinctly.' *Passanā* means 'to see,' and *vi* means 'clear, direct, distinct.' When one sees everything, sees all things clearly and distinctly, then one will get what we call *atammayatā*. To see everything clearly and directly as they really are will result in the realization of *atammayatā*.

The kind of *vipassanā* that we practice here is called *ānāpānasati*, 'mindfulness with breathing.' In fact, *vipassanā* and *ānāpānasati*, insight meditation and mindfulness with breathing meditation aren't really different. They are both the same in that they lead to the same results. If *ānāpānasati* is

practiced fully and correctly, then the result will be *atammayatā*, will be *atammayatā*.

The word *atammayatā* is quite difficult to translate. We've spent a lot of time thinking how to translate it into Thai, and then into English. So far, the word that we feel is most correct as an English translation is 'unconcoctability,' unconcoctability, or the inability to be concocted, where there's nothing that can concoct the mind. This is how we would like to explain or translate *atammayatā*. If we take the word *atammayatā* and break it up: *a* means 'not' or 'un'; *tam* means 'that'; *maya* means 'to fabricate, to make, or to concoct'; and then *ta* means 'the state.' So it's the state of not being concocted by that, meaning not being concocted by anything. *Atammayatā* is when the mind is free. The essence of *atammayatā* is the mind is completely free, so there's nothing that can concoct it, that can condition it. By the way, this word 'concoct,' if you're not used to it, comes from the Latin word 'to cook.' It means 'to cook together,' and we use the word concoct to mean the way the mind is brewed up, cooked up, conditioned, concocted by things. When the mind is so free that nothing can touch it – nothing can concoct it – we call that state, that realization, that understanding *atammayatā* or 'unconcoctability.' The essence of which, the mind that is free of, has transcended everything, and so nothing can affect it, nothing can concoct it.

All of the states of mind and all of our moods, as well as our emotions, are created out of or concocted by the things surrounding us. These states of mind, moods, and emotions are the products of our environment. When the mind is constantly being stimulated and concocted like this, it can't find any genuine rest. There's no real peace when the mind is always being affected and influenced by the things around it. But if there's something that can make it be otherwise, something that will keep the mind from being cooked up and concocted by the environment, then that thing would allow us to have true peace, to have genuine rest. And this thing that will allow us to really be at rest is called *atammayatā*. A Thai pronunciation would be *adammayata*, but the way it's written in English it would look like *atammayatā*.

We ought to understand the very basic fact that the condition of the mind is concocted by environmental factors. The things around us concoct the mind, and so sometimes there's happiness, sometimes sadness, sometimes elation, sometimes depression. Sometimes the mind is frightened, sometimes it's satisfied. All these different conditions of mind are concocted by the environment. We ought to understand that normally the mind is constantly

being concocted by its environment, and in this state there's no real freedom and no real rest.

All those things surrounding us that concoct our thoughts, moods, and emotions, all of these things that can concoct the mind like that are called *paccaya*, *paccaya*, which is usually translated 'conditions.' By *paccaya*, we mean all these things that can concoct the mind. You should know that there are both external *paccaya* and internal *paccaya*. These things – both external and internal things – can concoct the mind.

They have in Thai the words *prung taeng*, which are very colorful words, but sometimes difficult to translate. We like to translate *prung* as something you do say with food; it can mean to cook, to prepare. And *taeng* is something means to decorate or beautify, such as to put make-up on or to put on clothes and things like this. These when we translate them into English, we prefer the word 'concoct,' but often we find the words also 'condition, to condition, or to compound, or to form' – these are some other translations. In the Pāli language the Buddha used, the word is actually *saṅkhāra*, *saṅkhāra*. The prefix *sañ* means 'together' or 'completely.' And *khāra* means 'to make.' So it can mean 'to make together, to fabricate, to form.' Or to bring things together until you've got something complete. All of our thoughts, all of our moods, all of our emotions, all of our states of mind are fabricated out of external and internal *paccaya*. And then there is a thought which is formed, is ready made in the mind. All of our ideas arise in this way through the activity of *saṅkhāra*, this concocting together until there is some complete product.

The activity or function of *saṅkhāra*, of concocting, is going on constantly in the mind. These ideas and moods are constantly being concocted from moment to moment. First one idea is concocted and then that idea has an effect, which is another idea, which has an effect or result, which is another idea or mood. And so each idea or mood is concocted, and in the arising of the new idea there is further concocting of another idea, and another, and another, and another. And so this flow of concocting of ideas and moods and emotions is happening all the time in the mind. Please watch this as it occurs and understand this basic fact that the mind is constantly concocted in this way.

The concocting of external things is relatively easy to observe. We've got these eyes and they're contacted by sights, and this causes visual experience. And regarding that experience there are feelings, ideas, thoughts, emotions, and so on. We have these ears, which are stimulated by sounds, and there arises hearing, which concocts feelings and thoughts and emotions. We have these

noses, which are stimulated by odors, and from this experience there is concocted more ideas, thoughts, emotions. We have these tongues, which are stimulated by flavors, and this experience then concocts feelings, ideas, emotions, and so on. And we have these bodies, which are covered by skin, and when the body surface is stimulated by objects, by touches, this kind of experience also concocts ideas, thoughts, emotions, moods, and so on. These five avenues of stimulation lead to the concocting of ideas, thoughts, and so on. This happens on the most basic level of our experience, where the normal activity of our senses leads to the concocting of ideas, thoughts, and so on. But there's also a sixth sense, the internal sense. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body are external senses. Then there's the internal sense of the mind, the heart, or we could say the mind-sense. This knows internal objects. The external senses know external objects, but the mind knows internal objects. So this mind-sense is stimulated by these internal mental objects, and this leads to further concocting of ideas, emotions, moods, and everything. So from these various kinds of stimulation by various paccaya, there is the concocting of feelings, thoughts, emotions, especially the one of the concocting via the mind-sense. This is the most subtle and crucial of all. This is how this concocting takes place constantly in our minds.

So if you would like to study Buddhism, please begin your study, focus your study on the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, as well as their objects – the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and mental objects. Please don't overlook the importance of these things. We call them the *āyatana*, which is another difficult-to-translate word. By *āyatana* we mean both the sense organs and the sense objects. We could explain it as everything that we might be able to experience – all the things that we can contact or be stimulated by – both the sense organs and the sense objects. These are the *āyatana*. Many people think they're just child's play, nothing to take very seriously. Nobody pays much attention to the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and their objects. But in Buddhism, these are understood to be the source of all concocting. This is the starting point for all of the concocting of the mind. So please don't overlook their importance. To study Buddhism, we need to study these twelve *āyatana*[s], the six sense organs and the six kinds of sense objects.

If we can manage or regulate these twelve *āyatana*[s], it would be the same as being able to manage and regulate the world. If we can't manage these things, then every time some sight or sound comes in, it will concoct the mind. And so that everything in the world can concoct the mind, and it's concocting it all the time. But if we can regulate, manage, cope with, or work out these

āyatana, then nothing can concoct the mind. And when the world can't concoct the mind, that means that we have the world under control.

When we can regulate and control the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, that condition or that state is called *atammayatā*. *Atammayatā* is when the mind is unable to be concocted by anything because the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are watched over, are governed thoroughly. So then there's nothing that can come in and concoct the mind, nothing coming in to stir up the mind. So that mind is in the state of *atammayatā*. Nothing can make it positive, nothing can make it negative, this mind that is beyond the power of the senses to fabricate it or stimulate it, to concoct it. This is the mind that has *atammayatā*.

So there are these five external senses and the one internal sense. Everything begins with the five external senses. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are stimulated by their objects. And this concocts something arising with the internal sense. Once the external senses have been stimulated, then the internal sense is stimulated. And then there arises all kinds of internal concocting. So these external senses are the basic starting point of all concocting. But that's passed along to the internal sense. And so then when there's the stimulation of the senses, and then the mind sense gets concocted, then there arises feelings, pleasant and unpleasant, which concoct craving – foolish blind desire – which further concocts attachment, and so on. So this concocting: there's the external concocting of the external physical senses, and then there's the internal concocting within the mind itself. So obviously if we're going to understand what's happening in life, we need to pay careful attention to the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and very subtly observe what's happening there, how the external senses are stimulated and concocted, and then how the mind sense is stimulated, and observe all that concocting that happens within the mind. This is something of fundamental importance in our lives.

And so it all begins with the external senses, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body being stimulated by the environment. But that extends to, that stimulates the inner sense, the mind. And then various feelings, thoughts, emotions are concocted in the mind. But then those states, those ideas that are concocted in the mind, they go back out and stimulate or influence the senses, so that they further receive this or that stimulation. And so it begins outside, and then it comes inside, and then the concocting inside influences the outside. And then the outside, where the external senses are, stimulated again, then it comes back inside. So it goes back and forth – the external concocting the internal, the internal concocting the external – back and forth, back and forth. So all kinds of

ideas and moods are concocted within the mind, and then are affecting in stirring up the senses, and this concocting goes back and forth almost endlessly between the external senses and the internal sense, and all the things within the mind. All the concocting is pretty busy, and complicated, and tiring. Have you ever thought what it might be like if that concocting would stop? What would it be like if there were no concocting of the mind?

The internal paccaya are the most important. And of the various kinds of internal paccaya, or conditions which concoct the mind, there are three which are most important. Their names are *diṭṭhi*, *taṇhā*, and *māna* – *diṭṭhi*, *taṇhā*, *māna*. *Diṭṭhi* means ‘views,’ and *diṭṭhi* is especially the view that there is ‘self,’ that there is a self with this view of selfhood, seeing things as being self. With this view or opinion, this concocts the mind tremendously. *Diṭṭhi* essentially concocts the idea of ‘I, I’ – it’s always bring up ‘I, I’ or ego. And then there is *taṇhā*, and *taṇhā* is essentially that ‘I want, I want, I want,’ and the things that are wanted, so this is always bringing up ‘mine, mine, mine, mine,’ the things that belong to me, to ego. And then there is *māna*, *māna*, which is how I am. ‘I am like this.’ ‘I am like that.’ This sense of I am this, I am like that, the state I am in. The standard translation for *māna* is the word ‘conceit.’ Conceit not as it is often used nowadays in English meaning something like pride, but conceit meaning ‘I am this, I am that, I am like this, I am like that,’ the way of looking at oneself or evaluating oneself. This is conceit (*māna*). So these three internal factors of *diṭṭhi* (the view), *taṇhā* (craving), and *māna* (‘how I am’). These are the very important internal things which are concocting the mind quite powerfully.

So first there is *diṭṭhi*, *diṭṭhi* the view of ‘self,’ the view I exist, there is an ‘I.’ And with this view of selfhood, of ego, then there is comparison between this self and other selves, and this leads to *māna*, conceit, the conceit ‘I am better than,’ or ‘I am worse than,’ or ‘I am equal to,’ and so on. All these comparisons between this self and other selves is what is meant by conceit. Or also when there is I, when there is ego, there is ‘mine,’ that which belongs to ego. And ‘mine’ is also compared, ‘mine is better than yours’ or ‘mine is worse than yours’ or ‘mine is equal to yours.’ And this is also conceit. So because of *diṭṭhi* there is also a view, self view. There’s also conceit, the comparisons regarding I in terms of other selves or regarding mine in terms of possessions of other selves. And so these three things: *diṭṭhi* (self view), of *taṇhā* (craving, craving for mine), and then *māna* (conceit). These three are concocting the mind like crazy. These things are so powerfully concocting and stirring up, cooking up the mind. If we haven’t seen these three – we haven’t seen *diṭṭhi*, *taṇhā*,

māna – then we haven't seen ourselves. We don't even know ourselves until we have seen this self view, this craving for mind, and the conceit.

So there's self, there's 'of self' or the things that belong to self, and then there are the categories of how self is, the different ways self exists. So there are these three things which are concocting us all the time. We should examine them one by one and see how each of these concocts the mind.

So when there is self, when there is the 'I,' the ego, no matter what we call it. When there is self, it concocts selfishness, and selfishness is the source of all our difficulties and troubles in this world, all the selfishness creating problems around us, and even within ourselves. Selfishness doesn't just lead to social problems but it keeps us from being able to sleep at night. When there is selfishness, we can't even sleep peacefully. There's worry, there's fear, apprehension, jealousy – all kinds of things arising from selfishness – that prevent us from sleeping properly. And then 'of self': possessions. When this is concocted, the mind goes and basically plunders nature. There's all this nature and things existing within nature, but when the mind plunders nature, and takes 'this is mine,' 'this belongs to myself,' 'this is my possession,' then anything that happens to these things isn't nature's problem, it's 'my problem.' And so because we plunder natural things and take them to be mine, then we turn all these things into 'my problem.' And so that concocts the mind very often as well. And then all the comparisons, the māna of how I am in terms of others, and then I want to be better, I want to be smarter, I want to be higher. And so this leads to all kinds of competition and struggle. So people are always trying to be better than others, or more 'this' than others, more 'that' than others. So this is how these three things concoct the mind, creating more and more hassles and difficulties.

We're criminals just about all the time. We're criminals that are plundering nature almost constantly. We're taking natural things to be 'I,' 'this is me,' and so we steal things from nature constantly. We steal them as 'I,' we steal them as 'mine.' We're plundering nature ceaselessly. And so if a knife cuts the finger, we go and take it as 'the knife cut me, the knife cut me,' and it frightens us and scares us and we get all troubled by it. Or 'the knife cut my finger, my finger hurts.' And so it's just something natural, just a finger, just a knife, just some cutting. Because we're such thieves, we go and steal that as 'I,' 'that's my finger.' Because we're thieves in this way, we're causing ourselves a tremendous amount of problems.

There is 'I,' and there is 'mine,' there's 'self' and the 'possessions of self.' Now when there is self, it's impossible that everything that comes into contact with self is going to be the way we want them to be. If there's self, everything that comes into relationship with self is going to change. And it can't always be the way we want them to be. When things change in a way that pleases us, that gives rise to positiveness, and when things change in a way that displeases, when the change or the state of whatever is in contact with self displeases, then that is negative. So positiveness and negativeness arise because of the activity of self, so then the self must struggle with positive and negative all the time, but it's impossible to control it. Positive and negative can't be controlled. They arise according to their rules. And because of our foolishness, we're always struggling with these. So we always want it to be better and better, more and more positive. And so we're never really satisfied because of this positive and negative. So when there is 'I,' then there is 'mine.' And because of this 'I & mine,' there is positive & negative. When the mind is concocted in this way, there is never peace. So that is why we need atammayatā to free us from all this struggle and chaos.

To put this in very simple terms, we can say that our face is being slapped on the left and on the right by positive and by negative. But then sometimes we have some resistance, there is something that gives us immunity, so that the slapping by positive and negative is lightened, so that we can tolerate it, we can endure it. If we have enough immunity, the slapping isn't so bad and we can survive it. Or sometimes the immunity is strong enough so that we can't be slapped at all. The immunity is so strong that nothing can slap us – the positive and negative can't slap at all. And then there is freedom, there are some moments of freedom from the slapping of the positive and negative. Without this immunity we're getting slapped silly, and we can't endure it for very long. If we have some immunity then we can tolerate it and survive. Without any immunity we would just freak out and die, but if there's enough immunity we can survive. And if there's total immunity, then the slapping ceases, nothing can slap. And here, the thing which provides the immunity is merely atammayatā. Atammayatā is what immunizes us from the positive and the negative.

So it's atammayatā that protects us from the power of all these positive and negative things. All this positiveness and negativeness in the world can't affect us, can't concoct us if there is atammayatā.

Normally the positive value and negative value of things is constantly biting us, clawing us or slapping us, but with atammayatā that just can't happen. The mind doesn't get trapped within this positiveness and negativeness, so it doesn't

touch or it doesn't affect the mind, and then the mind is free, it's beyond all that biting, clawing, and slapping. This kind of knowledge, this kind of knowledge that prevents the mind from being slapped, is the highest knowledge there is. Atammayatā is the highest knowledge you can have in this world.

When we don't understand this fact about how atammayatā saves us from all that slapping, when we don't know this, we call this lack of knowledge, we call *avijjā*, 'not knowing or ignorance.' This ignorance is a basic possession of all human beings. We are all fundamentally ignorant, and because of this ignorance we're getting slapped around like crazy. We're being slapped silly, sometimes so much that we don't even realize we're being slapped. If we can know atammayatā, if we are able to see the fact of atammayatā, that ignorance will disappear, and then we'll no longer be able to be slapped.

Please study and observe this as a spiritual science. Don't just approach things as material science or mental science, but we must study these things as a spiritual science to see how the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are stimulated by the positive and the negative, and how this concocts dukkha, how stress and suffering are concocted in the mind by positiveness and negativeness. This is something that must be seen, observed, and realized through spiritual science.

You are to know that this knowledge of atammayatā is very ancient but it's been forgotten. This knowledge used to exist, but then has been overlooked. For example, allow us to digress a little bit, give an example of what we mean. If you carefully read the first pages of the Book of Genesis in the Bible, the first pages of the Old Testament, there's the story where God forbid Adam and Eve to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told them not to eat this fruit, otherwise they would die. This knowledge of good and evil, this is the same as positive and negative. God said that if you get caught up in these things you're going to die, which means, metaphorically, suffering, mental spiritual suffering, *dukkha*. But because Adam and Eve did not follow God's orders – God's orders were basically the command of atammayatā, atammayatā, but they didn't listen to atammayatā – and ate the fruit and have been slapped around ever since. But with atammayatā we don't eat the fruit, and so there's no knowledge of good and evil, there's no positiveness and negativeness, and so no slapping and no spiritual death, no dukkha. This was written down in the first pages of the Old Testament. The ancient Hebrew of thousands of years ago understood this very important fact of atammayatā. But then later in Christianity, the time of Christ and later, there was no talk of this, there was just telling people to be good, to be better. Atammayatā had been forgotten. But you

should be aware that *atammayatā* is very ancient wisdom, but we have forgotten it.

Don't overlook the fact that this was the first place in the Bible where God spoke to humanity, and the words were very short, very crisp, very clear: don't eat the fruit from that tree or you will die. That's what God said to Adam and Eve, but because of the ignorance of Adam and Eve they didn't understand, they didn't listen. And because that fruit hanging on the tree is attractive, it's inviting, and so they ate it, and then because of this they knew good and evil. This was the arising of positive and negative. So Adam and Eve here means all humanity. All humanity hasn't heard this command, the first commandment of God, and so we've gotten lost in positive and negative. It concocts us all the time, and makes us suffer. This is recorded there in the beginning of Genesis, but the Christians have completely ignored it. They take it to mean just a record of the fact that humanity is stubborn, obstinate, and disobedient. They've missed the essential meaning of Original Sin. Original Sin isn't in the disobedience. Original Sin is in this being concocted, is in attaching to the positive and the negative. This is the story of Original Sin, but we must understand it thoroughly that because of eating this fruit there arose the positive and the negative. This attachment to good and evil, to positive and negative, is the Original Sin. And the result of that is being slapped silly for the rest of our lives. And this is happening to all, all of humanity. So this is what's written down at the beginning of the Bible, the first words, the first commandment of God. And so once there was this wisdom and knowledge, but now it has been forgotten. It would be nice if humanity could re-attain this knowledge of *atammayatā*.

In some places in the Bible it also mentions a second tree, the Tree of Life. It is said that if one eats the fruit of this tree, then one is with God eternally, knowing no birth, no death, no suffering, just eternal life. You ought to know that this second tree is the tree of *atammayatā*, of unconcoctability. Eat the fruit of this second tree and the mind will not be deceived by good and by evil. The mind won't be tricked by the positive and the negative. The mind will be unconcoctable. This is the meaning of dwelling eternally with God. This knowledge is there in the Bible. This has been known for thousands of years. We should not waste this wisdom. So that's enough of our digression, we don't want to turn this into a Bible class.

So when do we get stuck in the power of the positive and negative? From what point do we fall under the power of the positive and negative? This is what we would like to look at now.

We start from when the fetus is in the mother's womb, at that time there is no positive and negative, because the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body – the senses of the fetus – are not yet functioning. And so there is no positive and no negative.

Not very long after birth the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind start to function. All the senses begin to function, so then the infant knows the various objects of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

If those objects feel nice and easy for the senses, then that feels positive, that is positive. And if the objects that stimulate the senses don't feel nice and easy for the sense system, then that is negative.

As soon as there arises this feeling of positiveness, then there arises the thought or whatever that '*I am satisfied.*' Ego is satisfied. Or if it feels negative, then there arises '*I'm not satisfied, I'm dissatisfied.*' Ego is dissatisfied. So as soon as this positive and negative arises, there arises this 'self.' Self is the result. Self is concocted by positive and negative. Some people who are hooked on logic, they insist that it works the other way around. There must be a self to be satisfied, there must be a self to be dissatisfied. First there is this self, and then there is positive and negative. This is what many philosophers and even psychologists argue. But the fact is, the fact which we can observe, is that first there is positive and then '*I am satisfied,*' the 'self.' Or there is the feeling of negativeness, then '*I am dissatisfied.*' 'Self' is the product of positive or negative.

So that you can observe that one has to be touched, one has to see something, for there to arise the sense of 'I.' If there is no stimulus of the senses, there's no 'I,' but as soon as there is physical contact, then '*I am touched*' or '*Something's touching me.*' First there is the physical contact, then it's interpreted as positive or negative, then there is the self. If we can observe this fact then we will understand the fundamental teaching of Buddhism, the teaching of *anattā*, *anattā*, 'not-self,' the teaching that the 'self' is merely an illusion. It's a concoction of the mind that doesn't have any real truth to it. If we can see that first the senses are stimulated – whether the eyes or the body or whatever – and then there arises this illusion of 'self.' To see this will illuminate the teaching of *anattā*, that all things are not-self. When we see that the 'self' is an illusion, it loses its power to concoct the mind. When this ignorance – that is the belief in 'self' – disappears, then self cannot harm the mind.

So we ought to examine and understand that the self, what we call the ‘self’ or what we take to be ‘self,’ is merely the product of reactions of the mind towards sense activity. It’s just this product of the concocting of the mind.

And then it’s always a positive self or a negative self; there’s no such thing as a neutral self or a merely a self. It’s always either positive or negative depending on how that self has been concocted.

And in one day, please ask yourself, ‘How many selves are born in one day?’ Count for yourself, watch the mind and count, ‘How many selves arise in one day?’ See how many hundreds or thousands of selves arising in consciousness.

Then in a month or a year or in the dozens of years that make up a human life, how many selves are being coughed up?

So the self can be seen to not really exist, it’s just a product of the feelings of positive and negative.

And that is the result of the fact that we don’t understand atammayatā.

So please, please examine life, this life in the present moment – right now, right here – and see how often the mind is grabbed up, is trapped by the positive and by the negative.

So watch carefully and see that the habit, the status quo of our lives, is to be constantly falling under the power of positive and the negative, to be slapped by it, controlled by it.

For this reason we want a new life, without really being aware of it. We have a very powerful urge or need for a new life, but we’re unaware of it, just in the way that you’re all looking for something, searching for something, but aren’t even aware of it, and don’t know what we’re searching for.

And just because we don’t know and don’t have atammayatā, all these external conditions are concocting up feelings of positive and negative in our minds.

So sometimes we laugh and sometimes we cry, but all that laughing and crying isn’t rest. There’s gladness and there’s sadness, but that gladness and sadness is not peace. With atammayatā, that frees us from the positive and the negative, we’ll be free of the laughing and the crying, the gladness and the sadness. We’ll be above all that, free of its power.

We can see for ourselves without having to believe anyone. We can see and directly experience that when the mind is most at ease, most at peace, most comfortable. That in that experience there is nothing that could be called gladness or sadness.

When we're glad, it's difficult to sleep and we don't sleep very well, and when we are sad it is also difficult to sleep. Have you seen this yet?

When there's no positive and negative exciting and concocting the mind, then that kind of peacefulness is incredible. It's so thoroughly peaceful, everything is cool and calm, there's nothing hot or ugly or disturbing. This peacefulness is total freedom, absolute freedom – the mind isn't trapped by anything. And it's complete purity. Real purity is only in that tremendous peace, that utter peacefulness. The positive and the negative only disturb the mind, but when that disturbance is gone, there's just this total peace, total freedom, and purity.

But now everyone in this world – all of us – are crazy about positiveness, aren't we?

You want to be better, and better, and better, because you've been tricked and deceived by the meaning of positiveness, and so you never find any peace.

And this only happens because we're ignorant, we're foolish, we see things as positive that are really harmful for us. We don't see the danger, we just take them to be positive. In Thai, there's an old saying that says "to see a spinning disc as a lotus." The word for disc here means specifically a disc that has teeth like a saw blade. So it's to see a spinning saw blade as a lotus, to see something incredibly dangerous, a spinning saw blade can just slice your head right off. But to see that as a lotus, something beautiful, fragrant, wonderful, something worth possessing – this is what we're doing because of our ignorance.

So we get tricked by and infatuated with the positive, and then it just bites us and bites us.

So then we've got a life that bites its owner, and we've got a goodness that bites its owner.

If we have atammayatā, the positive & the negative won't be able to deceive us, it won't trick us, and therefore it can't bite us.

Now all of us have eaten the fruit of that tree that leads to knowing good and evil. We've done this since right after being born from our mother's womb.

The value of atammayatā is that it lets us be above all the positive and the negative. This means that we're free from, out from under the power of, all things in this world. Nothing can influence us or control us.

We've spoken with you today about *atammayatā*. This essential teaching of Buddhism, this heart of the Buddha's teachings, has much more that we can say about it, but we've run out of time today, so we'll continue talking about *atammayatā* tomorrow.

Thank you for being patient listeners.

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